

# Welcome



Dear Community Leader:

Welcome to Montgomery County's Community Toolkit offered through the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. I want to thank you for volunteering to organize and enhance your community.

Healthy community associations are vital to our civic life in Montgomery County. They are partners with local government in identifying needs, solving problems and setting priorities. This toolkit is designed to help you and your neighbors form associations and provide established neighborhoods with a wide variety of resources.



I hope that you will find the Toolkit useful. It is full of resources, techniques and helpful hints. Our goal is to give communities and residents a voice in shaping their community issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Isiah Leggett".

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

## What is a Community Association?

A community association is a group of individuals with shared interests who meet regularly to accomplish common goals. An association may include homeowners, renters, apartment residents, business owners, school parents, religious congregations, parents and other caregivers, and members of non-profit organizations. Community associations include homeowners, citizens, or neighborhood associations.

Groups such as swim and tennis clubs, mom's clubs, garden clubs, PTAs, and religious organizations may also be seen as community associations. In many cases, these organizations are the primary communities individuals are active in.

## What are the benefits of having an association?

Community associations:

- ***Foster a sense of identity.*** A sense of common identity among members can be established and maintained through a range of activities including networking, social events, advocacy and volunteerism.
- ***Facilitate communication.*** Information can also be provided efficiently to a greater number of neighbors, resulting in a benefit to the community as a whole. Meetings provide opportunities for members to discuss issues and work toward resolving problems.
- ***Build relationships.*** A community association is one of the best ways to build relationships between neighbors. Association meetings provide an opportunity to get to know your neighbor through social activities. Building relationships helps neighbors become familiar with each other's needs, interests and become more supportive in problem solving.
- ***Create an organized, unified voice.*** Through a community association your neighborhood has a unified voice in County government and helps with identifying issues, creating partnerships and setting priorities. County services can often be provided to your community more efficiently through an association.
- ***Improve neighborhoods.*** Residents of your community can work through the community association and County staff to develop long range beautification and improvement projects.

# The Regional Services Center

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## Role of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) Regional Services Center is the local government office for the Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Friendship Heights, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, North Bethesda, Potomac and Rockville communities.

The Regional Services Center informs Montgomery County leadership of regional perspectives, expedites responsive service delivery and connects with local organizations and leaders to get their input on issues of local importance.

The Center functions as a local town hall, offering problem solving and information and referral services to the region. The Director of the Regional Services Center is a member of the County's Senior Management Team with direct access to the County Executive and department heads. Along with this liaison function, the Center also:

- Identifies regional priorities and future service needs;
- Implements local community initiatives;
- Maintains a library of County literature including the Recreation Guide, Master Plans, Glen Echo Park Guide, and Guide to Senior Resources;
- Maintains meeting rooms for public use;
- Provides direct services including sale of transit fare media and distribution of compost bins;
- Distributes welcome packets for new residents;
- Oversees County services in downtown Bethesda performed under contract by the Bethesda Urban Partnership; and
- Manages the site selection process for County facilities.

## Contacting the Center

You may contact the Center by phone at 240-777-8200. We are located in downtown Bethesda at 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814. Please visit our website at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/bcc](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/bcc) for regional information, calendar and news. You may also reach us by email at [bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov).

## Using eSubscribe

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center offers "Neighborhood News", a daily e-newsletter. To subscribe, go to: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov).

- On the right of the page, click on **Sign up for email updates: eSubscription**.
- On the **Welcome** page, click **Create an Account**.
- Scroll down to **Regional Services Centers** and check the box **Neighborhood News** for the **B-CC Regional Services Center Newsletter and Announcements**.
- Scroll down to the bottom of the page and complete the **eSubscription Registration Form**.
- Click **Submit** and you will be signed up to receive our newsletter.

## Citizens Advisory Board

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### The Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board

The B-CC Regional Services Center is also home to the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board. The primary role of the Board is to offer substantive advice on regional issues and needs to the County Executive and the County Council.

The Board is comprised of 15 representatives – five representing neighborhoods inside the Beltway, five representing neighborhoods outside the Beltway, and five members representing the local business community. As representatives to and from the business and residential communities, the Board strives to reflect the varying points of view within the region.

Vacancies on the Board are publicly and broadly advertised. Members are nominated by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council.

The Board has committees on land use, transportation, education, public safety, community building, quality of life, and North Bethesda.

To bring an issue to the Board's attention or for more information on Board activities or vacancies please call 240-777-8200, fax 240-777-8211, TTY 270-777-8212 or email to: [bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov).

#### **Citizens Advisory Board Community Forum**

**The Citizens Advisory Board holds a community forum at the beginning of each of its meetings.**

**Issues raised by community members are sent to the appropriate County departments for action and tracked by the Regional Service Center staff.**

**The Board also holds a public forum on community needs every two years prior to the development of the Capital Improvements Plan.**

## Getting Started

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### Get Organized

When possible, reach out to existing groups which may have similar goals or represent the same community. The B-CC Regional Services Center can help identify groups in your area.

These groups can offer the opportunity for a range of partnerships through their existing structure and resources. You may be the “shot in the arm” that helps a struggling or dormant organization become more relevant and responsive to the needs of its membership.

If there are no existing community organizations or you decide to form a group more closely tailored to your specific goals, begin by identifying two or three others willing to join an “organization committee.”

The organization committee can help with:

- Selecting an interim group leader;
- Suggesting topics for agenda/goals of the organization;
- Establishing a place and time for meetings such as a centrally located home, community center, or school and a time during the week that works best, usually after dinner; and
- Setting tentative geographic boundaries and a name for your organization.

### Set Goals

All organizations must carefully and clearly define their goals. A list of goals is a simple, but important, statement of the organization’s purpose. Goals should be specific, measurable, realistic, tangible and, most importantly, achievable. Remember to keep initial goals flexible enough to change as your membership grows.

Goals for a community association may include:

- Helping individuals get to know each other by holding social events.
- Organizing issue or educational workshops.
- Advocating for a local ordinance or project.
- Improving the community through neighborhood clean-up days and volunteer activities.

- Raising funds for a community project.
- Forming a Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime.

## Spread the Word

Nothing gets the word out better than personal contact. In years past some community associations were defined by the area an organizer could walk on a weekend afternoon.

Tried and true techniques for getting the word out include:

- Distributing flyers;
- Talking to neighbors one-on-one, and if possible, informally survey them about wants, needs, and concerns;
- Posting signs at key exits to the neighborhood and at activity centers; and
- Identifying other prospective leaders and getting them involved.

## Your First Meeting

The purpose of the first meeting is to introduce the fledgling association to your neighbors. The format should motivate the community not just to attend, but to encourage continued involvement.

Some ideas for a first meeting include:

- ***Invite a well known speaker.***  
Local elected or appointed officials are always good choices. Other speakers could include a local author or a media personality.
- ***Provide food.*** A summer cookout is a family-friendly option. Choose a nearby park, or at mid-block.
- ***Discuss a current problem.***  
Nothing motivates better than crisis. Make sure that you've invited partners likely to help you resolve the problem.

### First Meeting Do's and Don'ts

- **DO** provide name-tags to help new residents get to know each other
- **DO** keep the agenda light and focused on relationship building
- **DO** focus on identifying issues of concern
- **DO** ask for volunteers to research issues and report back
- **DO** emphasize the value of organization vs. individual action
- **DON'T** forget to offer food and provide a pleasant atmosphere
- **DON'T** cast the meeting as a debate or vote on particular solutions.
- **DON'T** get bogged down in conflicts between individuals.

# Leadership

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## Recruit Leaders

You can't do it all. Identifying and developing neighborhood leaders will help spread the workload and provide continuity over time.

People in leadership positions are responsible for coordinating the activities of a group, including activities designed to help the group achieve goals and feel good about working together.

A leadership position within a community association is a serious commitment. A leader:

- Impacts the association and the neighborhood;
- Possesses the organization's vision and the ability to build consensus;
- Delegates duties and authority to others;
- Encourages neighbor involvement and maximizes talent;
- Helps the association cultivate future leaders; and
- Recognizes the value in rotating leadership among members.

The task of recruiting and developing leaders is an ongoing activity for all members of the community association. Sometimes leaders are reluctant to share authority or delegate responsibility. Part of being a good leader is helping others grow into leadership roles.

### Developing Effective Leaders

**Search for many potential leaders, not just one or two.**

**Encourage people to switch tasks and discover their strengths.**

**Remind members to be open to change and bring in new members and leaders.**

**Encourage positive and productive communication.**

**Delegate responsibility by matching members' individual needs and strengths with the needs of the group.**

**Break big jobs into small parts and assign to different people.**

**Focus on goals and achievements, not personalities.**



## Job Descriptions

The following are key leadership positions typically found in neighborhood associations. Together they make up the "Executive Committee" of an association.

### ***President:***

- Serves as chief executive officer of the association
- Assumes general responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the association
- Presides at all meetings
- Reserves the authority to authorize specific actions in promoting the association's policies

### ***Vice President:***

- Performs the duties of the President in the absence of the President
- Serves on the association executive committee
- Coordinates committee chairpersons and reports status to the association
- Assumes duties as defined by the President

### ***Secretary:***

- Maintains the records of the association
- Takes minutes of meetings and keeps a permanent and accurate record of the association discussions and actions
- Receives and handles all correspondence addressed to the association

### ***Treasurer:***

- Keeps accounts of all expenses
- Makes payments upon authorization of the Executive Committee
- Collects membership dues
- Presents a written report each month to the Executive Committee and/or general membership

## Keep Members Interested

It is easy to attract new members in times of crisis. Hot button issues energize the neighborhood, particularly if residents feel their property values or quality of life is threatened. However, after the publicity dies away and the problem is resolved, active members may disappear. It is considerably more difficult to sustain interest during mundane times.

Keeping the interest and involvement of association members is an ongoing challenge in every neighborhood. Here are some pointers and ideas that hopefully will stimulate your thinking.

Here are some helpful hints to maintaining interest:

- ***Be realistic in your expectations of the members.*** Many neighbors have other priorities that may limit participation.
- ***Stay focused on a few well-defined goals or projects.***
- ***Regularly check that meeting times, locations and meeting lengths are convenient for members.***
- ***Celebrate each success.***
- ***Ask individual neighbors for help or their involvement.*** Sometimes a personal invitation to help is most effective. A person may be willing if asked, but may not volunteer or speak up in a group setting.
- ***Find out what is important to your members*** and get them involved in committees or projects involving their interest.
- ***Make sure to welcome new neighbors.*** Establish a welcoming committee that visits or calls each new resident. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center has welcome packets to help you.
- ***Organize regular social functions*** to encourage a sense of community.

### Welcome Packets

Welcome packets for new County residents are available at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center.

Consider distributing these packets as part of your ongoing new neighbor welcome efforts.

## Community Toolkit

- ***Sponsor clean-up days***, taking one street at a time so that the work seems manageable and can be accomplished in the morning.
- ***Create a telephone tree, listserv or other communication system.***
- ***Recognize volunteers*** by thanking each individual at a general meeting; acknowledging someone's efforts in your newsletter, or neighbors cooking dinner or cake/cookies for someone.
- ***Follow up*** on issues brought to the association for resolution.

## Hold Social Events

One feature of more successful community associations is to offer a range of activities. They do so by staying in touch with neighbors' individual needs.

Not everyone is an activist. Some of your residents may be motivated by an opportunity to socialize. Your most successful event may be a 4<sup>th</sup> of July Picnic, Labor Day Parade, or Halloween Parade.

Consider combining social events with social responsibility by including food drives, or raffles that benefit local charities.

Other ideas for building community include organizing:

- ***A community yard sale,***
- ***Used book sale,***
- ***Yard beautification contest,*** or a
- ***Community association logo contest***

## Undertake a Membership Drive.

Don't inadvertently restrict your numbers by having membership forms and sign up sheets only at meetings. In order to maximize your membership potential, be everywhere your neighbors are.

- ***Have volunteers go door to door.*** This can be a week-long effort or one-day blitz. Consider having a membership drive and then sponsoring a party that same day for volunteers to have fun and share experiences.
- ***Arm volunteers with printed materials.*** This can be a simple letter from the group's President that explains your neighborhood organization along with details of upcoming activities. Materials may also include information on municipal services and programs available in the area. Also, volunteers should carry membership forms with them and offer both immediate and mail-in membership opportunities.

## Community Toolkit

- ***Develop a block leader network.*** Block leaders can pass out flyers and newsletters, welcome new residents, serve as a conduit for specific problems on the block, and place volunteers in activities. Work with organized Block Watches to promote safety within your community.
- ***Members can also be found at community gatherings.*** Sponsor a booth at a community festival or event. This is a great opportunity to talk to people in your area. Remember to have information and membership sign-up sheets at your booth.

# Communication

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## Communicate

Reaching your audience will be a challenge for the entire organization. There are many ways to reach people. Here are some ideas for accomplishing this.

### *The Personal Touch*

- ✓ Door-to-Door flyer distribution
- ✓ Person-to-Person phone calls
- ✓ Recognition of member achievements

### *Community Events*

- ✓ Neighborhood surveys
- ✓ Booth at local events
- ✓ Coffees or other social events
- ✓ Join efforts with adjoining neighborhoods
- ✓ Send speakers to business groups, service clubs, schools or churches

### *Read All About it!*

#### Going Online!

Create an organization email address:

[mail.live.com](mailto:mail.live.com), [gmail.google.com](mailto:gmail.google.com)

Reserve a domain name:

[www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com)

Consider a blog: [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com),

[spaces.live.com](http://spaces.live.com)

Social networking site: [twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

Create a website — Examples:

[www.randolphcivic.org](http://www.randolphcivic.org)

[www.luxmanor.org](http://www.luxmanor.org)

[www.ebca.org](http://www.ebca.org)

[www.maplewoodcitizens.org](http://www.maplewoodcitizens.org)

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- ✓ Community Newsletter – for examples, see [www.randolphcivic.org/echo.html](http://www.randolphcivic.org/echo.html), [www.scribd.com/doc/6057778/EBCA-NewsletterSept08](http://www.scribd.com/doc/6057778/EBCA-NewsletterSept08) and [www.maplewoodcitizens.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/mapleleaf\\_sept08\\_4pg\\_1.pdf](http://www.maplewoodcitizens.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/mapleleaf_sept08_4pg_1.pdf)
- ✓ Ads in school, religious congregation, and club newsletters
- ✓ Bulletins, notices, pamphlets and posters

# Rules and Regulations

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## Establish Rules

The fundamental purposes of community associations are to provide a basis for protecting members' equity in the community and a framework within which people can make decisions.

Specific purposes of rules and regulations include:

- Enforcing the community's bylaws and policies in a fair and diplomatic way;
- Protecting, enhancing and promoting the purposes of the association as stated in the legal documents;
- Restricting and governing the use of the common areas and amenities;
- Establishing architectural guidelines and controls for aesthetic value;
- Establishing rules for the use of facilities by owners, guests and tenants;
- Amplifying, expanding, clarifying and interpreting the broad restrictions in the association's governing documents;
- Protecting and preserving the property and assets of the association and the owners.

## Draft By-laws

The following are "bare-bones" bylaws to help you get started. Each community will undoubtedly have its own approach.

### ***Article I – Name***

The parties involved shall choose the name of the organization.

### ***Article II – Purpose***

The purpose of this organization is to achieve and maintain decent and wholesome living conditions in Montgomery County, Maryland; assist persons living in the specific neighborhood to work together for the good of their neighborhood; and provide a non-partisan organization which will benefit this neighborhood and this County through worthwhile programs.

### ***Article III – Membership***

Section 1. Membership in this organization shall be open only to persons who reside or own property in the neighborhood boundaries.

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Section 2. The neighborhood boundaries are the interior of the streets that border the neighborhood.

Section 3. The organization may enroll honorary members, but these members may not vote on matters before this organization.

### ***Article IV – Annual Meetings***

During the first meeting of the calendar year, a meeting of this organization shall be convened for the purpose of electing officers. This meeting shall also be a regular meeting of the organization for other business.

### ***Article V – Officers***

Section 1. The officers of the neighborhood organization shall consist of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Section 2. The officers shall be elected at the first annual meeting from a slate prepared by the Nominating Committee, as well as from any additional nominations from the floor. The persons receiving the highest number of votes for each office shall be elected. Those elected shall serve until the next election.

Section 3. No officer shall serve more than three (3) consecutive terms in the same office. A term is one year.

Section 4. In case of a vacancy in office other than that of President, the vacancy shall be filled by election at a subsequent regular meeting of the organization.

Section 5. Officers may be removed for cause, including violation of the by-laws or dereliction of duty, by a majority of two-thirds of the votes at a regular meeting of the organization, provided that the officer to be removed has been notified in writing of the proposed removal at least thirty (30) days before the meeting.

### ***Article VI – Duties of Officers***

Section 1. The President is the chief executive officer of the organization. The duties of the President shall be to preside over all meetings of the organization, to call special meetings, to appoint committee chairpersons and to be or appoint the spokesperson for the organization to local government, the press, or other community associations.

Section 2. The duties of the Vice President shall be to serve as chief executive officer and preside over all meetings in the absence of the President, coordinate committee chairpersons and report status to the board and to succeed to the office of President in the event of a vacancy in that position.

Section 3. The duties of the Treasurer shall be to keep accounts of all expenses, collect membership dues, and to make regular reports of the organization's financial status.

Section 4. The duties of the Secretary shall be to maintain the records of the organization, keep accurate minutes for all meetings, receive and handle all correspondence addressed to the organization.



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### ***Article VII – Meetings***

Section 1. The regular meeting of the organization shall be held monthly. The time and place are to be designated by the President.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called by the President or by petition of ten (10) or more members. Such meetings may act on any business proper to the organization, provided that written notice of the meeting has gone out to all members at least ten (10) days before the meeting date.

### ***Article VIII – Committees and Programs***

Section 1. Committees and programs of this organization shall be established by majority vote of members present at a meeting of the organization.

Section 2. Committee members and chairpersons shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the President.

### ***Article IX – Procedure***

Unless the meeting has adopted some other procedure, all meetings of this organization are governed by guidelines of [Roberts Rules of Order](#).

### ***Article X – Amendments***

The by-laws of this organization may be amended at any meeting, provided that the proposed amendments have been sent to all members prior to the meeting at which they are to be considered.

After ratification by membership, by-laws are signed by the association president, vice president, and secretary.

## Set Fees

Community associations often charge fees to their membership. Depending on the association, the assessments may be paid monthly, quarterly, or annually. Keep in mind that fees can be a barrier to participation for some when determining fee amount.

At a minimum, fees should cover such costs as:

- Printing materials
- Website hosting
- Food and drinks for meetings
- Room rentals
- Insurance

Some associations offer expanded services to their communities. These fees may be optional to those who opt to receive them. Expanded services can include:

- Landscape and maintenance of common areas
- Social Activities
- Security patrols
- Fees for amenities (pool, tennis court, golf course, exercise room, etc...)

### Tips for the Treasurer

**Open an account with a local bank.**

**Hire an accountant to audit finances annually.**

**Require a second signature to act as a security measure and prevent fraud.**

**Determine fees/dues, based on actual needs.**

## Report on the Budget

An annual budget report is usually approved at the annual meeting of the association and clearly identifies itemized expenses and income for the prior year.

Many associations distribute the annual budget of the association and make it available through the Treasurer of the association, as required by the by-laws.

## Raise Funds

### *Steps to Success*

1. Set a fundraising goal.
2. Watch for hidden costs.
3. Give yourself and your group time to prepare.
4. Set up specific timeframes and stick to them.
5. Conduct fewer and more effective programs.
6. Stay motivated throughout the program by focusing on your goal.
7. Communicate clearly with all parties involved in the fundraiser before, during and after the program.
8. Recruit volunteers ahead of time.
9. Have fun!

## File for 501(c)4 Tax-Exempt Status

A community association should consider tax-exempt status by filing for 501(c)4 status with the IRS. To be eligible, a civic organizations must be operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare and not organized for profit.

Unlike 501(c)3 status, which is talked about next, an 501(c)4 organization may be politically active. Also, contributions to a 501(c)4 are not deductible.

The following are excellent online resources for learning more about 501(c)4 status:

<http://www.irs.gov/charities/nonprofits/article/0,,id=96178,00.html>

[http://nonprofitmanagement.suite101.com/article.cfm/what\\_is\\_a\\_501c4\\_organization](http://nonprofitmanagement.suite101.com/article.cfm/what_is_a_501c4_organization)

## Consider 501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Status

A key reason communities choose to establish a 501(c)3 is to create a foundation for raising money for a community improvement project or charitable activity such as:

- Purchasing recreation center improvements/equipment
- Funding an aging-in-place initiative
- Establishing a local school foundation

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Local bar associations may be able to direct associations to "pro bono" or reduced-cost legal services from lawyers experienced in the non-profit sector. In Montgomery County, contact the Maryland Bar Foundation Pro Bono Program at 301-424-7651, if you are looking for assistance. Their address is: 27 West Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Online resources for 501(c)3 requirements and forms may be found at:

<http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html>

# Meetings 10

## Conduct Regular Meetings

It is up to you to determine whether it makes sense to hold meetings annual, quarterly or monthly. Your community's goals should help in this determination. Regular and predictable meetings will help your association and membership stay involved and focused on the organization's goals.

## Conduct Successful Meetings

Your conduct of association meetings matters. Efficient and organized meetings will help attract participants and keep them engaged.

The following is a checklist to foster a positive meeting.

- ***Select a neutral place to meet***, such as a school or library meeting room, B-CC Regional Service Center, or a local restaurant.
- ***Prepare and post an agenda***
- ***Clearly state the purpose of your meeting on the agenda***
- ***Start and end on time***
- ***Keep the meeting moving and watch the general flow***
- ***Encourage participation***
- ***Summarize the conversation frequently***
- ***Stress cooperation, not conflict***
- ***Summarize decisions reached***
- ***Point out differences not yet resolved***
- ***State ideas positively and show their relation to the overall issue***

### Tips

Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the Board.

Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

For more information about Roberts Rules online, visit: [www.robertsrules.org](http://www.robertsrules.org).

*"Roberts Rules has been a great way to keep our meetings on track while allowing everyone a chance to state their opinions."*

~ Ilaya Rome-Hopkins, East Bethesda

- ***Use consistent rules – such as Roberts Rules of Order – to add structure to deliberations***
- ***Outline future actions and get commitments for follow through***
- ***Set the next meeting date, time and place.***

When you find yourself chairing or facilitating a community meeting, the ability to express yourself in a clear and concise manner is important. Listening, however, can be even more important.

Both speaking and listening are skills that everyone involved in the group should master, especially those in leadership positions.

### Speak Effectively

The most respected members of a group are often the best speakers. They are able to get an idea across to a group of people without dominating the meeting or rambling.

Here are tips to help improve your speaking ability:

- ***Know what you want to say.*** Outline your main points on a piece of paper before you speak. Use the outline as a guide to help you be more focused.
- ***Keep it short and to the point.***
- ***Speak clearly and project your voice outward.***
- ***Practice your speech.*** Try practicing your presentation in front of your mirror at home.
- ***Be Concise.*** Focus on one or two central ideas in your speech.
- ***Make eye contact with the audience.***
- ***Avoid distractions.*** Avoid words like “um,” “ah,” “kinda” and “you know”. Also avoid playing with your hair or glasses or jingling your keys.

### Listen to Others

A successful community leader works at listening to other individual's concerns. They focus on not just the words being spoken, but what those words mean.

This skill takes practice and hard work. The guidelines below may help you to improve your listening skills:

- ***Listen for the unfamiliar.***
- ***Rephrase important points in your own words.*** This will allow the speaker to clarify the statement if there has been a misunderstanding.

- ***Pay attention to details.*** Details are important in communication, especially if the membership differs significantly on the issue.
- ***Be open minded about new ideas and opinions.***
- ***Allow speakers to complete their ideas or opinions without interruption.***
- ***If you are not clear on terms being used, ask the speaker to define them.***

## Practice Active Listening

Active listening is making a conscious effort to hear, analyze, assign meaning to and respond to what another person is saying. Successful active listening can be exhausting, but will help build confidence that you care about what's important to your members.

Steps to becoming an effective active listener include:

- ***Focus on the Speaker.*** Establish—and keep—eye and face contact with the speaker. Reinforce what is being said is being heard through non-verbal facial expressions. To paraphrase an old saying, good listeners are like poor boxers: they lead with their faces.
- ***Use Receptive Language.*** Follow and encourage the speaker's train of thought by using receptive language; e.g., "I see," "Hmmm," "Un huh," etc.
- ***Listen for Key Words.*** It takes continuous action to focus on the essence of the information being shared. The listener's mind should be actively gathering, sorting, sifting, evaluating, synthesizing, and ordering the data.
- ***Respond.*** Verify with the speaker about the essence of what was said, especially if the thought is being captured on a flipchart or electronically for future reference. Ask questions for clarity but be cautious that the questions are not leading. Never, unless expressly requested, give an opinion on the presented information.

# Consensus 11

## Build Consensus

The goal of consensus building is to get individuals who hold different views on an issue to share information and negotiate to arrive at a mutually acceptable course of action. Consensus is not always possible in every situation but is a desirable goal, particularly in communities. A majority vote does not represent a consensus.

Begin building consensus by asking each individual for their opinion. For consensus to work, each should be willing to accept less than everything they want in order to help the association toward its goal.

Keep in mind the following tips to help your community reach consensus:

- ***Rank problems and/or solutions.***
- ***Brainstorm*** to help generate ideas in a short period of time.
- ***Encourage interaction*** in meetings, which may result in a consensus.
- ***Use negotiation techniques.***
- ***Create a focus group.*** Members of this group will help describe the problem or define others' perception.

The National Parks Service has an excellent resource for consensus building available on their website. You can find some of the following information and other useful tools at:  
[www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/index\\_comtoolbox.htm](http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/index_comtoolbox.htm).

## Use Brainstorming Tools

- ***Basic Technique:*** Break into small groups (15 people or less). Arrange chairs in a circle to allow everyone to see each other. Set aside a specific amount of time.

Describe questions that the group will respond to and check for understanding. Request that individuals not discuss the merits of each idea until all ideas have been recorded.

Write down all ideas on a flip chart. Print large, legibly and fast. Repeat back key words and phrases and be sure to ask the speaker to clarify ideas you do not understand. Build on and expand ideas. Push the group to consider other ways of looking at the issue in order to stimulate more ideas.

- ***Silent Thinking and Writing:*** Present a question or statement and ask individuals to spend 5 to 15 minutes reflecting, and then writing down their responses. Responses can



## Community Toolkit

either be handed in and a facilitator reads them to the group. Consider asking each individual to share if there are individuals who seem quiet or reluctant to speak.

- **Round Robin:** Ask each individual in turn to share one idea at a time until either there are no more ideas or the time limit is reached. Try reversing the direction of calling on people.
- **Popcorn:** Ideas are called out randomly and quickly.
- **Discussion Brainstorm:** Have a discussion about the question or issue for a specific amount of time, say 5 to 10 minutes. Then run the brainstorm, describing key ideas that came up.
- **Sticky Notes:** Each individual is given 5 minutes to think about a response to the question or issue. As an alternative pair individuals up to generate ideas. Individuals or pairs are asked to record their responses on as many sticky notes as necessary. The stick notes are then given to the facilitator who reads them and sticks them on the wall or a flip chart. Similar ideas are then grouped.
- **Reverse Brainstorming:** The first half of this technique is identical to Basic Technique. Once that exercise is over, re-state the question as its total opposite as a “worst case” question. Begin brainstorming again using the mirror image question. This time, after the answers are recorded, the facilitator “flips” each answer to its opposite. The answers from both exercises are then combined.

# Conflict 12

## Manage Conflict

Conflict can be daunting for a community association to address. Conflicts between neighbors can be particularly uncomfortable. Some community associations make it a point to avoid issues that split the community and pit neighbor against neighbor.

It is important that any conflict is addressed immediately to prevent damage to personal relationships. Disagreements among association members can be an opportunity for growth, change and new understanding.

Many disagreements can be resolved with mediation. A few suggestions to help manage conflict include:

- ***Talk directly to one another, face to face.*** Direct conversation is more effective than sending a letter or complaining to someone else.
- ***Choose the right time and place to talk.*** Find a neutral place where you can both talk undisturbed for as long as it takes. Approach the other person and ask if you can set up a convenient time to talk.
- ***Don't blame or call names.*** If you make the other person angry, they are less likely to be calm with you.
- ***Listen to the other person.*** Give them a chance to tell their side of the story completely. Although you may not agree with what is being said, show that you are listening by saying you hear what they are saying and that you are glad you are discussing the problem together.
- ***Negotiate a solution.*** Ask "What can we do to improve the situation for both of us?" or "What can we do to resolve our differences?".
- ***Check back with each other.*** Ask the other person "Is this working for you?".

### Need Help Resolving Conflict?

Consider contacting:

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 240-777-8200

Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County, 301-942-7700

# Getting to Know Your Community

# 13

## Know Your Neighborhood

An important part of running a community association is knowing it. Consider maintaining an archive or historian for the association. Your community newsletter or website are good places for publishing interesting facts for neighbors.

The B-CC Regional Services Center can help you locate information about your community. Other resources include:

- **Board of Elections** – (voting districts, elected officials)  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections)
- **GIS Maps** - [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gis](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gis)
- **Master Plans** - [www.mc-mncppc.org/community/plan\\_areas/master\\_plans.shtm](http://www.mc-mncppc.org/community/plan_areas/master_plans.shtm)
- **Parks** - [www.mcparkandplanning.org/parks/facilities/find\\_a\\_park.shtm](http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/parks/facilities/find_a_park.shtm)

## Take a Survey

Use a survey to identify neighborhood issues and allow for feedback for your association meetings. Following are the two most common methods of conducting a written Neighborhood Survey. Method I takes more time initially from the survey takers, but it is more thorough and will return more reliable results. Method II relies on the neighbors to take the initiative to fill out the forms and to not procrastinate. While it is not necessary (and in reality, almost impossible) to retrieve a form from each resident in a neighborhood, your efforts will be most effective the more input you receive from residents.

### Method I

1. Gather 2-4 neighbors together and distribute pencils, survey and clipboards.
2. Assign each person to a particular section of the neighborhood. You may not be able to cover the entire neighborhood in one day—Saturday or Sunday afternoons are best. You may want to spread your effort over a few weeks.
3. Survey takers should knock on every door, introduce themselves, explain why they are there, ask the resident to complete the survey, then note the address on the form and go to the next door.
4. Keep a list of addresses where no one was home or the people did not have the time to complete the survey and return the next day or week.

## Community Toolkit

### Method II

1. Gather 2-4 neighbors together to distribute survey sheets to homes in the community. The survey sheets will indicate when the survey takers will return to collect.
2. Assign each person to a particular section of the neighborhood. You may not be able to cover the entire neighborhood in one day—Saturday or Sunday afternoons are best. You may want to spread your effort over a few weeks.
3. Survey takers should return on the date indicated to retrieve the surveys. (They will find that most doors do not have the sheets reattached to the doors, so they will need to knock on each door and probably return a second or third time to retrieve the forms).

### Online Surveys

You may also consider an Internet survey. Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) is an excellent recourse to design and deliver an on-line survey.

## Acknowledgments

**"An Introduction to Community Association Living"**, Center for Community Association Volunteers

**"Neighborhood Association Toolkit"**, City of Henderson, NV, Neighborhood Services

**"Neighborhood Organizing Toolkit"**, City of Riverside, CA, Office of Neighborhoods

**"Neighborhood Organization Toolkit"**, City of Cedar Hill, TX

**"Robert's Rules of Order - Summary Version"**, © 1997 Beverly Kennedy  
[www.robertsrules.org](http://www.robertsrules.org)

**"Community Tool Box"**, National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. ([www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/index\\_comtoolbox.htm](http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/index_comtoolbox.htm)).

***BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE REGIONAL SERVICES CENTER***

Serving the neighborhoods of Bethesda, Cabin John, Friendship Heights,  
Chevy Chase, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, North Bethesda, Potomac and Rockville

4805 Edgemoor Lane  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814  
[bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov)  
240-777-8200 (voice), 240-777-8211 (fax), 240-777-8212 (TTY)

## **County History and Government**

### **History of Montgomery County**

It was more than 300 years ago when the first European settlers arrived in what is now Montgomery County, an area stretching from the mouth of Rock Creek in the south to the Monocacy River in the north, the Potomac River on the west and the Patuxent River on the east. They found evidence of the occupation of Indians of the Piscataway Confederation. It was a beautiful forested area rich in game that included deer, buffalo, bear and wild turkey, with rivers and streams teeming with fish. Captain John Smith of Virginia explored the Potomac River in 1608 and was the first European to map the area.

The first settlers to colonize the area were from England, Ireland and Wales. The first patent for land was recorded in 1688 for a tract along the banks of Rock Creek. Once here, the settlers quickly cleared much of the virgin forest to grow tobacco and food and to build homes.

### **Current County Government**

Under the current system, the Executive submits yearly operating and construction budgets which the Council must approve. The Executive appoints the various department heads, and other County employees are part of the merit system.

Under the Charter, the County must submit to an independent annual audit, make centralized purchases and use competitive bidding.

The Council sits as a legislative body and initiates, repeals and amends local laws for the County as stated by the Express Powers Act. In addition, sitting as the District Council, the Council legislates in all areas of planning, zoning and land use. The Council cannot enact laws for any incorporated town, village, municipality or special taxing area on any matter covered by the powers granted to these jurisdictions.

In November 1986, the voters amended the Charter to increase the number of Council seats from seven to nine in the 1990 election. Five members are elected from geographical council districts and four are elected at large.

## 21st Century-Today

Montgomery County remains the most populous jurisdiction in the State of Maryland and is rapidly approaching the one million mark. Minority growth in the state of Maryland rose from 27 percent of the total population in 1990 to 40 percent in 2000. Almost half of Maryland's Hispanic and Latino population resides in Montgomery County. Thirty percent of County residents are foreign-born.

Montgomery County Public Schools serve 140,000 students from more than 161 countries (at 199 schools—32 of them National Blue Ribbon Schools). It is the 16<sup>th</sup> largest school system in the United States, with a \$2 billion operating budget.

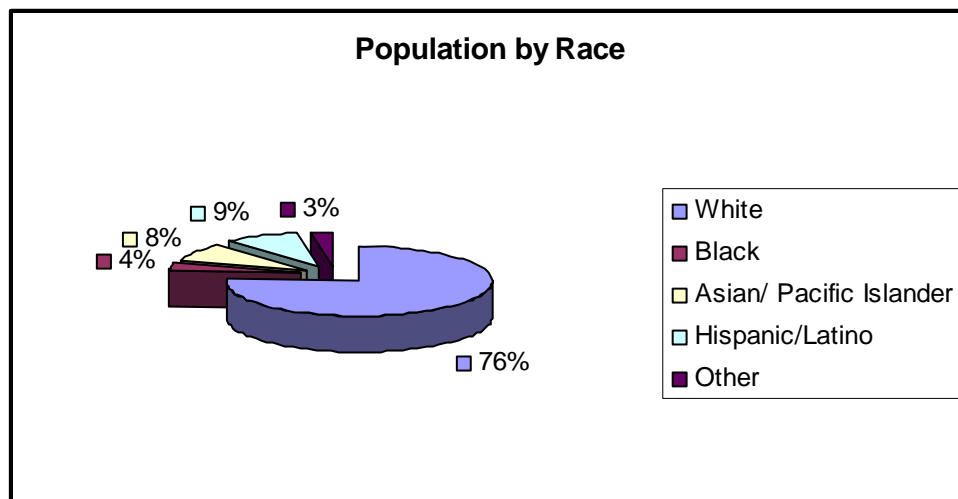
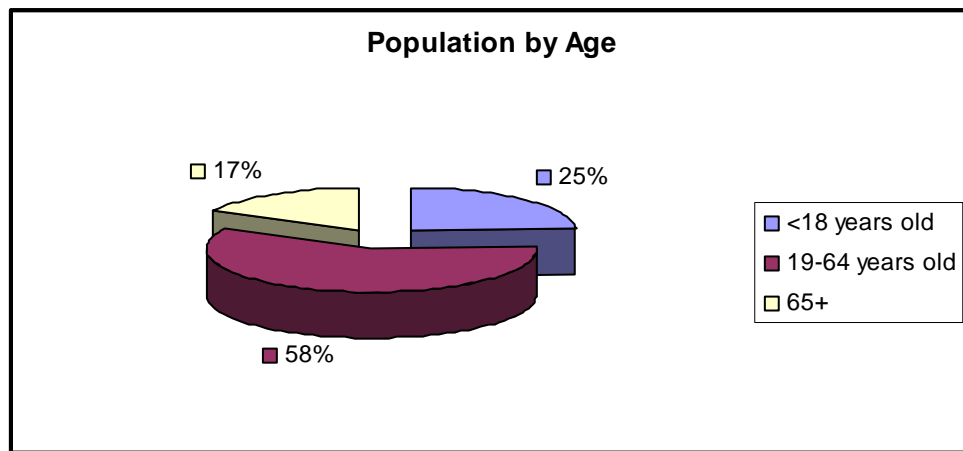
The County boasts one of the country's most educated workforces, leading the nation with the highest percentage of residents who hold advanced degrees. Research institutes including Johns Hopkins University's Montgomery County Campus, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the National Institutes of Health and the University of Maryland have campuses in Montgomery County.

Located at the epicenter of the mid-Atlantic's thriving federal and advanced technology marketplace, Montgomery County is home to more than 200 biotech companies, representing two-thirds of all those located in Maryland and the third largest cluster in the nation. With a hugely successful business incubator network, a nationally-renowned 93,000-acre agricultural preserve, an award-winning Small Business Mentorship Program, and world-class conference and performing arts facilities, Montgomery County is in an ideal location for both large and small businesses.

In 2006, Isiah Leggett became the first African American to be elected as County Executive.

## Regional Demographics *(from 2005 Census Update)*

	Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Area
Total Households	96,230
Total Population	236,585
Median Household Income	\$99,155
Population <18	56,996
Population 19-64	141,763
Population 65+	37,824
White	186,050
Black	9,968
Asian/Pacific Islander	26,792
Hispanic/Latino	25,129
Other	9,536





## Neighborhood Meeting Locations

### How to Rent Space through Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF)

To reserve space neighborhood meetings and events, you have 3 options:

(1) **Submit request online** - In order to submit requests online, you must first register as a web user. You will need either a Visa or a MasterCard. Debit or check cards are not accepted. Your 1-time registration will be processed in 2-3 business days, and you will be notified via email that your account has been activated. All future facility use applications may then be completed online and we will figure out the charges for you.

(2) **Fill out a printable form from CUPF website** - You must estimate the cost, print and mail the form to us with payment\*. Applications will not be processed without payment. Overpayment may be refunded or credited to account.

(3) **Pick up a facility use form from CUPF office or from facilities** - Hardcopy forms are still available from the CUPF office as well as all the County facilities. If you need assistance, come into our office to meet with one of the [scheduling staff](#). Please call in advance to schedule an appointment to ensure the staff person you wish to see is available and to minimize your waiting time.

### Fees Calculation

Please be advised that fees apply for ALL time you expect to be in a facility. Time needed for set-up, clean-up and for your participants to vacate the facility must be included in the hours you request. Utilities are now included in the base rental fee.

### Abbreviated Facility List

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

Chevy Chase Elementary School

Bethesda Regional Library

Potomac Community Center

Veteran's Park  
School

Bethesda-Chevy Chase High

## **Community Toolkit**

### **FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT**

Community Use of Public Facilities

600 Jefferson Plaza, Suite 300

Rockville, MD 20852

240/777-2706 · Fax 240/777-2707

Maryland Relay Service (for the hearing impaired) 1-800-735-2258

*(Telephone Access to Multilingual Network for Interpreters in Every Language)*

# Block Party / Neighborhood Event Requirements

Division of Operations  
www.montgomerycountymd.gov

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101 Orchard Ridge Drive, 2nd Floor, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878  
240.777.6000, Fax 240.777.2080

If your neighborhood would like to have an event that involves closing all or part of a roadway, you must complete a block party/neighborhood event [application](#). Please fax or mail the completed application to the address or number listed above.

- 1) The applicant **must** post signs notifying the public at least one (1) week prior to the day of the event. The signs **must** be posted on the right side of roadway facing traffic at the points of closure or at the beginning of each street along an event route. Sign lettering **must** be legible for motorists to see and comprehend.
- 2) Traffic cones spaced no further than five (5) feet apart **must** be used to close the roadway(s) for block parties and other events where applicable. The County will be **unable** to provide traffic cones for your use; however, private companies that rent traffic cones may be found in the yellow pages under "Rental." Traffic cones shall be a minimum height of 28" tall with two (2) 4" reflectorized bands around cone.
- 3) The applicant **must** provide a written notice three (3) days in advance of the event to residents of all properties abutting the roadway(s) listed on this permit.
- 4) Vehicle and pedestrian access to properties abutting the roadway(s) listed on this permit **must** be permitted where possible; **Emergency Vehicles Shall Be Permitted Passage At All Times.**
- 5) The Authority of the Department of Transportation extends **only** to permission to occupy a public right of way. Our issuance of this permit does not relieve the participants of their obligation to obey all applicable State and County laws. You may contact the Police if you desire information relative to any specific law (i.e. excessive noise, public nuisance, etc.).
- 6) County regulations permit the consumption of alcoholic beverages on those portions of closed roadway(s) approved for neighborhood block parties during the times listed on the permit.

## Community Toolkit

- 7) The Emergency Communications Center, 301.279.8000, **must** be notified the day of your event.

## Useful Phone Numbers

Abandoned Vehicles.....	301-840-2454
Affordable Housing.....	240-777-3600
Animal Services.....	240-773-5960
Board of Education.....	301-279-3617
Board of Elections.....	240-777-VOTE
Building Permits & Inspections.....	240-777-6370
Cable Complaints.....	240-773-2288
Child Care.....	240-777-3130
ChildLink (birth to age 5 information).....	240-777-4769
Circuit Court.....	240-777-9415
Commission for Women Counseling/Career Center.....	240-777-8300
Community Use of Public Facilities.....	240-777-2706
Consumer Protection.....	240-777-3636
County Attorney.....	240-777-6700
County Council.....	240-777-7900
Crisis Center (24 hours).....	240-777-4000
Domestic Violence Services.....	240-777-4210
Economic Development.....	240-777-2000
Emergency Police, Fire and Rescue.....	911
Employment.....	240-777-5000
Environmental Protection.....	240-777-7770
Fire Code Violations.....	240-777-2457
Health and Human Services .....	240-777-1245
Housing Code Enforcements.....	240-777-3785
Housing Opportunities Commission.....	240-773-9000
Human Rights.....	240-777-8450
<b>Information &amp; Referral (General County).....</b>	<b>240-777-1000</b>
Land Records.....	240-777-9477
Libraries.....	240-777-0001

## Community Toolkit

Licenses.....	240-777-9460
Metro ( <a href="http://www.wmata.com">www.wmata.com</a> ).....	202-637-7000
Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU).....	240-777-3600
Montgomery College (General Info).....	240-567-5000
Motor Vehicle Administration.....	1-800-950-1682
Noise Control.....	240-777-7770
Parks.....	301-495-2525
Parking Violations.....	240-777-6000
Pet Licenses.....	240-773-5946
Police Non-Emergency.....	301-279-8000
Potholes.....	240-777-6000
Property Tax Information.....	240-777-8950
Transportation.....	240-777-6000
Recreation Programs.....	240-777-6804
Recycling & County Trash Collection.....	240-777-6400
Regional Services Centers	
Bethesda-Chevy Chase.....	240-777-8200
Eastern Montgomery.....	240-777-8400
Mid-County.....	240-777-8100
Silver Spring.....	301-565-7300
Upcounty.....	240-777-8000
Register of Wills.....	240-777-9600
Rental Assistance.....	240-777-4400
Ride On/Transit Information Center.....	240-777-RIDE (7433)
Schools Information.....	301-309-MCPS (6277)
Senior Citizen Information.....	240-777-3000
Sexual Assault Services.....	240-777-1355
Snow Removal.....	240-777-6000
State's Attorney.....	240-777-7300
Strathmore Music Center.....	301-581-5200
Street Lights .....	240-777-6000
Tax Assessment.....	240-314-4510

## Community Toolkit

### Utilities

Allegheny Power.....	1-800-255-3443
BGE (Baltimore Gas Electric).....	410-685-0123
Miss Utility (call before you dig).....	811
PEPCO (Potomac Electric Power Co.).....	202-833-7500
Washington Gas.....	703-750-7571
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission..	301-206-8000
Volunteer Center.....	240-777-2600
Zoning Information.....	240-777-6240

## County Programs

### Vital Living

The project's purposes are to facilitate "aging in place" for residents of our neighborhood, to explore how effectively such a project can be implemented in our suburban setting, to provide a model for other neighborhoods that wish to undertake similar initiatives and, possibly, to partner with our project.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/ads/COA/SeniorVitalLivingIndex.asp>

### Keep Montgomery County Beautiful

The Keep Montgomery County Beautiful (KMCB) program was started in 1983. It encompasses a series of initiatives designed to maintain the County's high quality environment, especially in connection with the Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT Director maintains a citizen advisory committee called the KMCB Task Force. Members of the Task Force include citizens, local business people, garden club representatives, the Montgomery County Conservation Corps, area bottling companies and recycling representatives, civic association officers and County staff. The Task Force functions to educate citizens and change attitudes about littering, support cleanup and beautification projects, encourage citizens and businesses to extensively recycle, and improve awareness about graffiti in the community. For more information go to:

[http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dirtmpl.asp?url=/content/dot/dir/comm\\_kmcb.asp](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dirtmpl.asp?url=/content/dot/dir/comm_kmcb.asp)

### Pedestrian Safety Initiative

In 2007, Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett announced his Pedestrian Safety Initiative, a strategic plan designed to reduce pedestrian collisions and ensure that all areas of the County provide safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians. To learn more about this initiative and how you can become involved, visit:

[http://montgomerycountymd.gov/content/home/pdf/ped\\_init.pdf](http://montgomerycountymd.gov/content/home/pdf/ped_init.pdf) .

### Housing First

The Housing First program focuses on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services as needed. What differentiates the Housing First approach from traditional



emergency shelter or transitional housing approaches is that it is “housing-based”, with an immediate or primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing. This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve. For more information, call 240-777-4082.

### Go Montgomery! Transportation Plan

Metropolitan Washington has the third worst traffic congestion in the nation and in just ten years, our average drive to work could more than double. **The solution?** The County’s long-term, comprehensive transportation plan will significantly increase spending on new roads, transit, hiker-biker trails, and pedestrian safety.

[http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/Go\\_MC/GoMo.asp](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/Go_MC/GoMo.asp)

### Safe Speed

The launching of the Safe Speed automated enforcement program adds Montgomery County to a growing list of communities worldwide that use automated speed enforcement to reduce traffic crashes and save lives. The program is the first in Maryland to enforce speed limits of 35 mph or less in residential areas and school zones. Speed cameras provide police with one more tool to protect pedestrians and other motorists by targeting aggressive driving behaviors.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/poltml.asp?url=/content/POL/districts/FSB/sod/speed/Speed.asp>

# Environment

## Tree Maintenance

The trees in the public right of way are maintained by Montgomery County. The maintenance of all other trees is performed by the Highway Services Section of the Division of Operations under a permit granted by the Maryland State Forester's Office. Under the Maryland Roadside Tree Law, all trees growing on a publicly maintained right of way are considered part of the State Forest. Any activity which can affect the health of these trees, such as pruning, removal, insect and disease control, planting, root cutting, etc., requires a permit from the State Forester. For information regarding The Maryland Roadside Tree Law or to request a permit, call 301-854-6060 or go to:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hwytmpl.asp?url=/content/dpwt/operations/highway/tree.asp> .

## Leaf Collection

Leaves in the down-county areas where the County provides vacuum collection services will be picked up from early November through mid-December. The leaf vacuum collection district is bounded by I-495, I-270, the Rockville City limits, Norbeck, Bel Pre and Bonifant Roads, Northwest Branch Park, the District of Columbia, City of Takoma Park, and Prince George's County boundaries.

The Leaf Collection Program will be conducted for approximately 6 to 8 weeks and includes postings for two scheduled pick-ups. Green signs will be posted throughout the work areas several days before the crews' arrival. The crews will attempt to allow a weekend for residents to rake their leaves to the edge of the road for vacuum pick-up. Signs will be removed after the crews complete each street. The second and final fall collection will begin after Thanksgiving, depending on weather conditions. Red signs will indicate that this is the final collection. The same procedure of posting, collection, and sign removal is used for the final vacuum collection.

**Leaves should be placed in piles or containers on the grass or behind the curb.** Placing leaves in streets or alleys can disrupt traffic and surface drainage, hamper snow removal operations or pose a fire hazard to automobiles parked over them.

**Collections are restricted to leaves only.** Sticks, branches or coarse garden debris should be placed in containers or tied in bundles not more than four feet long and placed where household trash is regularly picked up.

Residents who miss the two scheduled vacuum collections will need to place their leaves in paper yard waste bags or reusable containers, which will be picked up on their regular yard waste collection day. **Leaves placed in plastic bags will not be accepted.**

The Department of Transportation reminds residents that although every effort is made to maintain the posted schedules, weather and equipment problems may affect the timing.

- For information about the **Vacuum Leaf Collection Program**, contact the Highway Maintenance Section at 240-777-6000 or visit:  
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hwytmpl.asp?url=/content/dot/highway/vacuum.asp>
- Live outside the Vacuum Leaf Collection Area? [Click here for information about how to get leaf collection in your neighborhood.](#)
- For information about the [Yard Waste Collection Program](#), contact the Division of Solid Waste at 240-777-6410

## Road Salting and Snow Removal

When it snows, 200 employees with 175 pieces of equipment spring into action. Here's a snapshot of the County's snow response plan:

### Frequently Asked Questions about Snow Removal

#### 1. Who plows Montgomery County streets?

The County clears 4,800 lane miles of County-maintained streets. County forces, supplemented by contractors, clear our major and neighborhood roads. If you are not sure whether the County maintains your street, call 240-777-6000 and ask the representative to check.

#### 2. If the County doesn't plow my street, how do I find out who does?

Municipalities, such as Rockville, Gaithersburg, Takoma Park, or the smaller jurisdictions in the County, clear their own streets. See our ["Who Clears Snow"](#) page for more information.

3. **Who clears State highways, such as I-270?**

The Maryland State Highway Administration clears all numbered routes such as Georgia Avenue (Maryland Route 97) in the County. Check the State [website](#) for information they may provide about snow removal on State roads.

4. **Who else clears roads and parking lots?**

Montgomery County Public Schools, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Metro, homeowners associations, commercial property owners, and others clear snow from their properties.

5. **How soon does the County start plowing?**

During the snowstorm, no plowing begins until there are 3 inches of snow on the streets.

6. **What happens if there are less than 3 inches of snow on the streets?**

Major County Roads and primary neighborhood streets are treated. Bridges and elevated roadways are spot salted.

7. **What happens if there are 3 or more inches of snow on the roads?**

All major County roads and primary neighborhood streets are plowed, treated and cleared following the snowfall.

**For more information, visit:**

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hwytmpl.asp?url=/content/dot/highway/snowplow.asp>

## Curbside Recycling

Montgomery County provides once-a-week curbside recycling collection service to all residents of single-family and town homes, except for those in [municipalities](#). Place all recyclables at the curb by 7 a.m. on your recycling day. Unsure about your recycling day? Use the [Collection Day Lookup](#) or call 240-777-6410.

### Need a new bin?

Your blue bin belongs to your current home. While the blue bin is for recycling, we know that the bins also make great laundry baskets, toy holders, and even moving containers. But, please leave your bin behind if you move to a new residence! If your new home is bin-less when you arrive, [order a new one on-line](#) or call 240-777-6410.

### My bin's too small!

## Community Toolkit

Sometimes, one blue bin is just not enough for the recyclables you generate during the week. If this occurs on a regular basis, you may want a second bin. Alternately, the County now offers blue bins in several sizes. A larger size may be the answer to your situation. For a larger bin, or to get a second one, [order on-line](#) or call 240-777-6410.

The maximum weight for recycling containers is 45 pounds.

## Compost Bins

Composting Bins are available at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. Please call to confirm availability at 240-777-8200 or 240-777-8212 (TDD). We are located at 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814

Large capacity compost bins:

- Assemble in 2 minutes (no tools!)
- Adjustable sizing to fit large or small yards
- Hold more than 20 bags of leaves and grass (20+ cubic foot capacity)
- Slide off for easy turning or access
- Lightweight (6 lbs), easy to move or store
- UV-stabilized for 5-10 years of use
- More than 24,000 already working in Montgomery County yards and gardens

## Bulk Trash Collections

Each residential property receiving **Montgomery County-provided trash collection** is entitled to 5 bulk collections per calendar year for certain types of miscellaneous and/or bulky household trash.

Bulk collections must be scheduled in advance with the County by the occupant or resident.

- The collection will then be made on your trash collection day.
- All items must be placed at your curb by 7:00 a.m. on the day of collection.
- Collections are made between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

## To Schedule a Bulk Trash Collection

## **Community Toolkit**

Call Customer Service Line at 240-777-6410 before 11:00 a.m. on the business day before your trash collection day. Any requests received after 11:00 a.m. will be scheduled for the following week. Please provide a list of items to be picked up.

## Public Safety

### Divisions/Stations

#### [Which District do I live in?](#)

<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> District 1 / Rockville</b></p> <p>1451 Seven Locks Road</p> <p>Rockville Maryland 20854</p> <p>240-773-6070</p>	<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> District 2/ Bethesda</b></p> <p>7359 Wisconsin Avenue</p> <p>Bethesda, MD 20814</p> <p>301-652-9200</p>
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### Neighborhood Watch Training

Neighborhood Watch is one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime and reduce fear. Neighborhood Watch fights the isolation that crime both creates and feeds upon. It forges bonds among area residents, helps reduce burglaries and robberies, and improves relations between police and the community we serve.

The training consists of a three-hour session one evening a week, for three weeks. The training will provide a history of Neighborhood Watch as well as create awareness, help to organize citizens, teach you how to coordinate with law enforcement, identify concerns, issues and problems, and develop strategies. For more information go to: [http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/poltmlpl.asp?url=/content/Pol/districts/FSB/2d/community\\_services.asp](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/poltmlpl.asp?url=/content/Pol/districts/FSB/2d/community_services.asp) and scroll down to Neighborhood Watch.

### Home Security Surveys

This is a free service through the Montgomery County Police Department. An officer will come to your residence and provide crime prevention recommendations on securing your home based on crime patterns and/or trends.

## Community Toolkit

If your community is interested in having this training or surveys, please contact [Officer Matthis](#) at 301-657-0119 or 240-876-1277.

### Cell Phones for Seniors

The 2nd District is offering cell phones to senior citizens. **The cell phone will allow the caller to call 911 only.**

Terry Edwards, a volunteer, will be distributing the cell phones at the 2nd District Station by appointment only. Terry Edwards can be reached at (301) 652-9200 to schedule an appointment.

The 2nd District will continue to collect cell phones and there are donation receipt forms available. If anyone has any questions regarding the program, please contact Officer Dana Matthis at (301) 657-0119 or go to: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/poltml.asp?url=/content/Pol/districts/FSB/2d/cellphones.asp>

### Senior Forum- Free Movie

Join Officers Dana Matthis for a morning of safety information, door prizes and a **FREE** movie. This program is sponsored by the Montgomery County Police, P&G Theaters and Westfield Montgomery Mall.

**Location:** P&G Theaters Westfield at Montgomery, 7101 Democracy Blvd, Bethesda, Maryland

**Time:** 9:30 a.m.

For more information go to: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/poltml.asp?url=/content/POL/districts/chief/communityservices/seniorforum.asp>

### Red Light Enforcement Program

- Enforcement Cameras operate 24 hrs a day/7 days a week
- Registered owner receives a \$75.00 civil citation
- Payments may be made [online](#)
- No points will be issued against the vehicle owner's driving record (similar to a parking ticket)
- Insurance companies cannot consider the ticket in calculating insurance rates
- Failure to pay fines will result in one's inability to renew the vehicle registration



Citizen requests for additional red light camera locations may be submitted to the Police Department at [mcpd.redlight@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:mcpd.redlight@montgomerycountymd.gov).

### Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force

Though the formal work of the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force has now been completed. The report and executive summary can be found at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/GangTF/index.asp>. The work of the Task Force will continue as the recommendations are implemented.

Gang activity and gang-related violence is on the increase in the Washington metropolitan region and no community is immune to it. It's a community-wide issue—not just a law enforcement or a school issue. To learn more, please contact: [gangtaskforce@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:gangtaskforce@montgomerycountymd.gov).

### Anti Graffiti Program

Graffiti Abatement Partners, Inc. (GRAB) is a private organization that partners with the County to provide graffiti clean up. GRAB does not remove graffiti from private property or on public utility boxes, but can investigate and report the incident. The GRAB Director will schedule Alternate Community Service workers to clean-up or paint-over graffiti.

If you see graffiti on our County traffic signs, you can report it to our Traffic Engineering Operations Section at 240-777-6000 or at [trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov). These signs are delicate and therefore the County would prefer to clean them.

If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Community Outreach Program in the Director's Office of the Department of Transportation at 240-777-7155 or via email at [mcdot.outreach@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:mcdot.outreach@montgomerycountymd.gov).

### Project Lifesaver

Project Lifesaver is a proactive response by the Montgomery County Department of Police to identify those individuals within the community who have a propensity to wander and not be able to return home. Once identified, these individuals are equipped with a traceable bracelet so that in the event they wander police, using specialized equipment, can find them in a short amount of time. This program has been implemented in 554 jurisdictions in 41 states across the country. There have been over 1,500 searches with an average of 22 minutes and a 100% success rate.

## Community Toolkit

For more information go to:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/poltmlpl.asp?url=/content/POL/districts/chief/communityservices/ProjectLifesaver.asp>

# Planning and Development

## Montgomery County Planning Department

The Planning Board's Office of Community Outreach and Media Relations strives to inform the community about Montgomery County Park and Planning initiatives. Through the ongoing efforts of County Park and Planning staff and actions by the Planning Board, they are building great communities in Montgomery County. Here's how you can play a part.

### Stay Informed on Development

Subscribe to [InfoShare](#), the weekly e-newsletter, which contains information on the Planning Board agenda, upcoming events in the Department of Parks and important notices from the Planning Department.

### Want to Testify?

The Planning Board meets every Thursday at its [Silver Spring headquarters](#) and welcomes your input on items that come before them. Register to testify on an item up to 10 days in advance of a Planning Board hearing. [Sign up online](#) once the agenda is posted, call 301-495-4600 to put your name on the list or submit your name to the Planning Board clerk on the day of the hearing. Unable to testify in person? Send your thoughts to the Board at [mcp-chairman@mncppc-mc.org](mailto:mcp-chairman@mncppc-mc.org). If you've never addressed the Board, learn more about testifying with the [resident's guide](#).

## Department of Permitting Services

The mission of the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) is to provide the highest quality of public service while insuring compliance with Montgomery County development and construction standards. Simply put, anyone who wants to develop land or build something on it in the County has to obtain a permit from DPS to do so. DPS enforces standards that control what goes on before, during and after construction. Also, zoning matters, such as whether or not a business activity is being conducted in a residential area, whether or not someone has built something too close to a property line, or whether or not someone may sell flowers on a public street are regulated by DPS. Permitting Services does not get involved in disputes between business owners and their customers, between tenants and landlords, or between homeowners and their neighborhood associations.

## Community Toolkit

Some of the specific services provided by DPS include the issuance of street-grading, storm-drain, sediment-control, well, septic, building, electrical and use-and-occupancy permits; the licensing of electricians and vendors; and the inspection of building, road-construction, and land-disturbance activities. DPS is a coordinating agency for approvals from other agencies (such as Fire and Rescue, WSSC, MNCPPC, State Highway Administration) for permits that we issue.

The DPS automated permit system makes it possible for customers to access permit information, schedule inspections, and accomplish a host of other permitting tasks via our [website](#). Also, customers can perform some of these functions by using the DPS “Interactive Voice Response” telephone system (240 777-6210).

## Zoning Violations and Illegal Construction Activities

The Department of Permitting Services (DPS) maintains a phone line for citizens to request investigations of suspected zoning violations and illegal construction activities (building without permits). The phone number is (240) 777-6259.

When you contact DPS, please provide the following information:

- Your name, address and phone number (not required; anonymous complaints are accepted).
- The exact address and/or location of the property where you have observed a possible code violation.

You may also submit this information [online](#).

If you wish to have your name and personal information remain confidential, please clearly state this request during your telephone call to DHCA or in your written complaint.

## Housing Code Enforcement

The mission of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), Code Enforcement Section, is to maintain and preserve the quality of life in Montgomery County in general and that of our neighborhoods and housing stock in particular. The Code Enforcement Section is responsible for administering Chapter 26, Housing and Building Maintenance Standards, Chapter 48, Solid Waste, and Chapter 58, Weeds, Montgomery County Code. These Codes define how properties are to be maintained in Montgomery County.

Consistent enforcement of the County Codes will help to:

- improve the quality of life for Montgomery County citizens;

## Community Toolkit

- stabilize neighborhoods;
- provide safe, decent, and clean dwelling units;
- maintain and enhance property values; and
- prevent blight.

We accomplish these goals by investigating complaints, performing legally required inspections and educating our citizens regarding their rights and responsibilities in the area of property maintenance.

If you would like to report a complaint, please call the Housing Code Office (240) 777-3785 and provide the following information:

- Your name, address and phone number (not required; anonymous complaints are accepted),
- The address and/or location of the property where you have observed a possible code violation,
- The property owners' or occupants' names, if known. You may also submit this information in writing to: DHCA, Housing Code Enforcement, 100 Maryland Avenue, 2nd Floor, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

If you wish to have your name and personal information remain confidential, please clearly state this request during your telephone call to DHCA or in your written complaint.

### **What happens next?**

You will receive notification identifying the Inspector assigned to investigate your complaint. This will allow you to follow the progress of the investigation. If violations are found, a Notice of Violation will be mailed to the property owner requiring compliance by a certain date. A Notice may also be posted on the site. The amount of time allowed for code compliance varies based upon the type of violation and the time necessary for making repairs or corrections. Generally, 30 days are allowed for the correction of non-emergency violations. Emergency violations must be corrected within 24 hours. The property will be re-inspected to determine whether violations have been corrected.

### **If violations remain uncorrected**

If violations are not corrected, various civil and criminal penalties, including substantial fines, can be imposed. The County also has the right to clean up a property and charge the property owner for costs incurred. For additional information, visit the Housing Code Enforcement office [website](#).

### **What occurs after filing a complaint?**

Complaints are assigned to Zoning/Building Investigators/Inspectors who, if they find violations, instruct the violators to take corrective action. If a violation is not corrected within a reasonable time, various civil and criminal penalties, including substantial fines, can be imposed. The department keeps complainants' names confidential.

### **Will The Results Of An Investigation Be Available?**

The Investigator will inform you of important developments in the case and its final outcome.

### **How Long Will the Investigation Take?**

Normally, an investigation begins within one to three days from receipt of the complaint. Investigation time varies according to workload and/or complexity of the complaint. For additional information, visit the DPS [website](#).

## Senior Information and Services

The Department of Health and Human Services has primary responsibility for the delivery of public health and human services that address the basic and critical needs of the County's most vulnerable children, adults and seniors in Montgomery County.

First and foremost, the Department provides core services that protect the community's health, protect the health and safety of at-risk children and vulnerable adults, and address basic human needs including food, shelter, clothing and personal care. The Department also provides a number of other services to assist families to be healthy, safe and strong.

For more information about the services available for seniors, please call 240-777-3000 or 240-777-4575 (TTY). You may also visit the Department of Health and Human Services [website](#) or email [hhsmail@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:hhsmail@montgomerycountymd.gov).

### Sample List of Information and Services

- Abuse, Neglect and Financial Exploitation
- Benefit Checkup
- Home Energy Assistance Program
- Medicaid Waiver
- Medical Assistance Long Term Care
- Medicare
- Medicare D-Prescription Drug Plan
- Rental Assistance
- Social Security
- Disability Parking

# Transportation

## Go Montgomery! Transportation Plan

Metropolitan Washington has the third worst traffic congestion in the nation, and in just ten years, our average drive to work could more than double. The solution? The County's long-term, comprehensive transportation plan will significantly increase spending on new roads, transit, hiker-biker trails, and pedestrian safety. For more information go to:

[http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/Go\\_MC/GoMo.asp](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/Go_MC/GoMo.asp)

## Renew Montgomery

The Renew Montgomery Program is designed to improve the quality of life in Montgomery County and focuses on the refurbishment and replacement of the deteriorating infrastructure in mature neighborhoods. The "facelift" includes the repair and replacement of public sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Other improvements such as storm drain repairs and tree maintenance can also be included as appropriate. The program is neighborhood-oriented and endeavors to ensure that improvements completed are the priorities of the community, as well as those of the County's desire to renew important components of the infrastructure. This is accomplished by inviting the early participation of community leaders (homeowner or civic association representatives) to provide input for Department staff involved with the repairs. The goal of the improvements is to assure effective, safe and attractive vehicular and pedestrian access to the business districts and/or local public facilities and recreational opportunities.

For information on participation in this program please contact the Community Outreach Coordinator at **240-777-7150**

## Sidewalk or curb ramp needed

If your neighborhood was built without sidewalks, you may benefit from the County program for retrofitting sidewalks. Priority is given to sidewalks that serve children walking to school and people with disabilities. If the curb is missing a ramp or your neighborhood would like to request to have new sidewalks installed, you must file a petition with the Division of Capital Development's Sidewalk Program. The main number is 240-777-7220 and staff will explain the



process regarding the installation of new sidewalks. Highway Services will only connect missing links between stretches of previously existing sidewalk.

## **Crosswalk markings, missing curb ramp, traffic signs, and traffic signals**

To report poorly marked crosswalks, missing curb ramps, problems with traffic signs or signals, pedestrian signals with insufficient time to cross on County roads, email the Traffic Engineering and Operations section, Department of Transportation at [trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov) . You can also call them between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm at 240-777-6000.

## **Reporting Potholes**

Potholes on County roads can be reported to the Division of Operations' Customer Service Center, either by calling 240-777-6000 or by completing a form on the County's [report potholes form](#).

If a motorist sustains vehicle damage from hitting a pothole, a claim can be filed with the County's Division of Risk Management by calling 240-777-8920 any business day between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., or by writing to the County Executive at 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850.

## **Street Lighting Maintenance**

Report a broken street light by email at [trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov) or by calling 240-777-6000.

## **Taxi Cab Complaints**

You may call in your comments to 240-777- 2625 [TTY 240-777-2630]. The Hot line will be answered by staff from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. weekdays. Messages can be left at all other times and someone will return the call.

We encourage customers to first call the taxicab company to see if the company can resolve the complaint. Before you proceed, please remember that this is not the web site or telephone number to call for "Where is my ca?" problems. Persons who have "Where is my cab?" problems

## Community Toolkit

should call the taxicab companies, since they are the ones who are providing the service. The telephone numbers are:

**Action Taxi** 301-840-1000  
**Barwood Cab** 301-984-1900  
**Montgomery County Taxi Cab** 301-926-9300  
**Regency Cab** 301-990-9000  
**Sun Cab** 301-252-0575

## Ride-On and Transit Information

You will find information for bus schedules and other commuter services information [online](#).

### ***BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE REGIONAL SERVICES CENTER***

Serving the neighborhoods of Bethesda, Cabin John, Friendship Heights,  
Chevy Chase, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, North Bethesda, Potomac and Rockville

4805 Edgemoor Lane  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

[bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:bethesda.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov)

240-777-8200 (voice), 240-777-8211 (fax), 240-777-8212 (TTY)